Instructional Programs

Effective programs for LEP students will take into account the influence and development of the native language.

This section will summarize the most successful approaches for teaching students from other language backgrounds. Some additional methods and techniques will be described as well. These have been culled from research literature as well as teachers' experiences. Detailed descriptions of the approaches can be found in published texts and through some of the references provided. Educators interested in implementing an approach have several options, including visiting and observing a program in action, requesting program assistance from a regional educational laboratory or state education agency, or contracting with a consultant. The section concludes with a discussion of curriculum and standards.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

For perhaps the majority of educational contexts that include LEP students, an ESOL approach is the only practical one. This might be the case either because a qualified teacher who is fluent in both English and the student's other language is not available, or because there are so many other languages represented by students that having a bilingual teacher for each language is impractical.

In Missouri, both of the above reasons, coupled with the relatively low numbers of students in the majority of districts enrolling LEP students, make ESOL the approach of choice. In addition, the only formal teaching recognition in Missouri is the ESOL endorsement; there is no bilingual certificate or endorsement. Below are brief descriptions of three typical ESOL approaches, listed in order from most to least effective.

Structured ESOL Immersion

Typically employed in elementary grades, this program attempts to provide students bilingual teachers in a self-contained classroom. Nevertheless, the language of the classroom is English. The advantage for the students is that a teacher can rely on the students' native language for explaining and elaborating on key skills and concepts. While an effective approach where there are sufficient numbers of LEP students to comprise a class, structured immersion is not usually implemented with very small (i.e., 1-20) numbers of students, or where students come from many language backgrounds.

Content-based ESOL

This is probably the most widely adapted ESOL approach in schools. Content-based ESOL recognizes that language is a means to an end and focuses on delivering curriculum content through English in such a way as to make the content understandable (i.e., "comprehensible") to English language learners. Both elementary and secondary students benefit from this method. It provides the advantages of not removing students from content area instruction to focus exclusively on learning English, while at the same time teaching the same content all students receive.

Pull-out ESOL

The least effective ESOL method is to periodically remove, or pull out, LEP students from the classroom. Unfortunately, in many districts this seems to be the only reasonable alternative. Often only one or two qualified ESOL teachers must reach a number of students scattered across several buildings and grade levels. During the pull-out time, teachers may work one-on-one with students, or group them according to ability or grade level.

The detrimental effects of pull-out can be mitigated when the ESOL teacher collaborates effectively with regular classroom teachers, who employ helpful content-based strategies.

Bilingual Education

Bilingual classrooms in Missouri really only exist in some of the large city schools. Nevertheless, three approaches to bilingual education are described below since it is clear that a properly implemented bilingual classroom is the most effective, long-term educational setting for LEP students. Furthermore, elements of successful bilingual classrooms can be implemented in other classroom settings as well. As before, the types are listed from most to least effective. [All things being equal, these three methods are more effective, in the long term, than the most successful ESOL method]

Bilingual Immersion

When fully implemented, this method provides varying percentages of instruction in either English or a second language for the student's entire school career, grades K-12. Typically, students begin school with most of each day's instruction given in the "minority" (non-English) or native language. By graduation, slightly more than half of daily instruction is in English, with the remainder in the native language.
Needless to say, these programs require teachers who are not only qualified in content area(s) but highly proficient (in verbal and literacy skills) in two languages as well. The main outcome of this approach is students who demonstrate high academic competence in two languages.

Two-way Developmental Programs

This is essentially a broad heading for programs where both language minority and language majority students are in the same classroom. It can include immersion programs, as well as late-exit programs. An immersion differs from a two-way approach mainly in that the former can be implemented without necessarily having a population of language minority students present (in other words, a school of monolingual English-speaking students can have a French immersion program). The goal is still for participating students to become bilingual through long-term structured use of both English and another language.

Late and Early Exit Programs

Both of these kinds of programs begin with daily instruction split between the minority and majority languages, then transition students into all English instruction at some point in time. In contrast with two-way bilingual programs, late- and early-exit programs are specifically designed for speakers of non-English languages since the purpose is to have students successfully function in an all-English classroom. Late-exit, also called maintenance, programs may go for as long as six years, but were originally conceived

as K-12 programs. Early-exit, also called transitional, programs are usually designed to move bilingual students into English classrooms after 2-3 years.
Additional Classroom Types

Team-teaching
In schools where the classroom and instructional approach permit, team-teaching may be a useful way to "mainstream" LEP students and avoid frequent pull-out sessions. This technique may work especially well at the secondary level when the ESOL teacher can also teach the subject matter. Team-teaching incorporates collaboration, joint planning and cross-curricular themes into instructional programs.

"Sheltered" classrooms
This term refers to a room where only LEP students are taught. Students are taught the same curriculum as their peers, but in a context where the teacher can employ techniques designed to help make the content understandable to them. These techniques include language simplification and additional contextual clues. Another term used for this kind of classroom is "language sensitive."

Resource classrooms
For various reasons (number of staff, physical facilities, etc.), some school districts have found that strategically placing an ESOL Resource Classroom in a school facilitates student progress. These rooms are probably most effective at middle and high school grades, where students take separate content classes. They can also serve as an actual ESOL classroom for part of the day. At other times, students may drop in to discuss readings, complete tests, work on projects, or do individualized units of coursework.

Newcomer Centers
Larger school districts and those with a steady influx of students new to both school and the U.S. have had success with newcomer centers. Depending on need and district resources, a center may serve as a kind of "chamber of commerce" for the school and community. Centers provide a safe and supportive context for students before they move into a regular school. Some districts bring all new students to a single site for assessment and initial English instruction, and may keep them there from six months to a year. Additional classes may be offered that help students adjust culturally, socially and academically.

Standards and Achievement
The ultimate goal of any ESOL or bilingual program is, of course, to provide LEP students with the needed support to achieve the same educational standards set for all students. Although in some ways this is easier said than done, it is important to keep the goal in mind. Otherwise, well-meaning "exceptions" for LEP students turn into practices which, in effect, create lower expectations for them.

In developing instructional objectives that lead students to high achievement, schools can rely on both state and national standards.

The full text of the TESOL Standards is online at www.tesol.edu

ESL Pre-K-12 Standards
In 1997, TESOL, Inc. unveiled the *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students*. This document, coming on the heels of a national standards movement, offers researchers, administrators, and especially teachers clearly articulated standards that are tied to three broad goals for LEP students:

1. ***To use English to communicate in social settings***
2. ***To use English to achieve academically in all content areas***
3. ***To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways***

The rest of the standards document is divided into three grade-clusters, pre-K-3, 4-8, and 9-12. In each of these sections, each standard is explained with descriptors, sample progress indicators, and vignettes which discuss relevant background and instructional sequence details. A forthcoming document will detail how assessment can be tied to these standards.

The Show-Me Standards

www.dese.state.mo.us

In Missouri, the Show-Me Standards represent our state's educational expectations for all students. This means local schools have the responsibility to ensure that not only do LEP students develop the kinds of skills called for in Communication Arts, but that they achieve to high levels in all of the Knowledge and Performance standards. Doing so will require a plan that incorporates LEP student needs into the entire school's educational program.